

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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SUBJ: IRANIAN-TURKISH TIR TRANSIT DISCUSSIONS AND ECONOMIC
RELATIONS

REF: (A) ANKARA 8154, (B) TEHRAN 10788

1. DESPITE EXTENSIVE EFFORTS THE EMBASSY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN THE REAL REASON FOR THE APPARENTLY ABORTIVE NOVEMBER 12-15 MEETING BETWEEN TURKISH MINISTERS OF COMMUNICATIONS (I.E.TRANSPORTATION) AND FINANCE AND GOI MINISTERS OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND FINANCE (ANSARY) AND ROADS AND TRANSPORT(FARAHBAKHSHIAN)).PRIOR TO THE MEETING, IT WAS ANTICIPATED(REFTELS) THAT THE LONG-STANDING AND SEEMINGLY POINTLESS IMPASSE OVER THE TURKISH TIR TAX WOULD BE RESOLVED BY THE MEETING AND THAT THE RESULTING BILATERAL TRANSPORT AGREEMENT WOULD REMOVE THE OBSTACLE TO IMPLEMENTING THE OCTOBER 1975 BILATERAL ECONOMIC PROTOCOL WHICH CONTAINED IRAN'S COMMITMENT OF \$1.2 BILLION IN CREDITS TO TURKEY. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE USUAL EXAGGERATED COMMUNIQUE AFTER SUCH MEETINGS, COMMUNIQUE PRODUCED BY THIS MEETING CLEARLY INDICATED A RATHER SOUR EXPERIENCE. THE ENGLISH PRESS SECOND-PAGED THE MEETING'S RESULT WITH THE TITLE, "TURKISH MINISTERS END 'CORDIAL' VISIT." THE COMMUNIQUE WAS BLAND AND BRIEF, WITH THE SUBSTANTIVE PORTION READING, "THE TWO PARTIES AGREED THAT SUCH EXCHANGE OF VISITS WAS OF VALUE TOWARDS EXTENDING COOPERATION BETWEEN IRAN AND TURKEY AND ACCORDINGLY BOTH HAD FOUND THE VISIT TO

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BE OF MUTUAL BENEFIT."

2. CONTACTS WITH OFFICIALS OF MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MEAF, ROADS AND TRANSPORT AND COMMERCE, WHO WERE INVOLVED IN THE TALKS PRODUCED LITTLE ADDITIONAL TO THE PUBLIC STATEMENT. THE MEETING WAS INAUGURATED WITH LIVE TELEVISION COVERAGE. ALTHOUGH THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE USUALLY CARRIES THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH MEETINGS, THE HOST WAS MINISTER ANSARY, THE HEAD OF THE BILATERAL COMMISSION WHICH MET IN ANKARA OVER A YEAR AGO. ALL THIS SUPPORTED EXPECTATIONS OF A POSITIVE RESULT. BUT NOT EVEN THE NEXT MEETING HAS BEEN SCHEDULED AND ALL OFFICIALS WILL SAY IS THAT THE TWO PARTIES ARE STILL ENGAGED IN FINDING A "MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FORMULA FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE" (I.E. FROM IRAN). AMBASSADOR BATMANGHELIDJ, MFA'S DIRECTOR GENERAL, ECONOMIC, TOLD EMBOFF THE DISCUSSIONS EMBRACED ALL THE PROJECTS ENUMERATED IN THE OCTOBER 1975 BILATERAL PROTOCOL. THE PUZZLING QUESTION IS WHY THE GOI SEEMINGLY PROLONGS THE TRANSIT IMPASSE WHEN IT IS BEING PENALIZED WITH THE HIGHER TURKISH TIR TAX(REF B). TO THIS QUESTION, BATMANGHELIDJ SAID THE GOI PERCEIVES NO PRESSURE ON THIS ISSUE, A PERCEPTION QUITE AT ODDS WITH THE OBTAINED FROM TRUCKING FIRMS HERE. WHEN EMBOFF OBSERVED TO ONE OFFICIAL THAT EXPECTATIONS WERE HIGH FOR A SETTLEMENT OF BILATERAL ISSUES AND THAT IT IS UNUSUAL FOR TWO MINISTERS TO COME TO A MEETING WITHOUT SOME ASSURANCE OF A POSITIVE OUTCOME, HE REPLIED, "WELL, THAT'S THE HISTORY OF OUR DEALINGS WITH THE TURKS." PERHAPS EMBASSY ANKARA CAN ASCERTAIN SPECIFIC POINTS AT ISSUE IN THIS CONTINUING IMPASSE. LACKING SUCH, WE ARE LEFT WITH THE MORE CULTURAL REASONS MENTIONED IN REF B.

3. THE EMBASSY HAS THE DETAILS ON ALL GOI FOREIGN ASSISTANCE DISBURSEMENTS FROM MARCH 21,1975 TO THOSE CONTEMPLATED IN THE CURRENT YEAR WHICH ENDS MARCH 20,1977; ALL APPEARING FOR TURKEY IS THE \$11.9 MILLION(2.5 PERCENT INTEREST) DISBURSED EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR THE LAKE VAN FERRIES.
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